

**From:** Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 9 May 2019

**Subject:** Thames Estuary Production Corridor

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** None

**Electoral Division:** Dartford, Gravesham, Swale, Canterbury and Thanet

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**Summary:**

The Thames Estuary Production Corridor was launched in 2017 with the ambition of making the Thames Estuary a world class leader for production in the creative and cultural industries.

Over 100,000 creative industry workers live in the Estuary, half of these work elsewhere: the Production Corridor initiative aims to build on this strength. Over £200m investment has already been delivered over the last decade into large scale creative production facilities, with 150 creative and cultural focussed projects currently planned or underway. Connecting 21 higher and further education institutes with a creative industries specialism will provide a globally relevant laboratory for R&D and innovation in the creative sector. By 2030 investment will deliver 50,000 jobs and + £3.7bn GVA, creating the UK's densest concentration of creative production activity.

A successful £4.3m bid to the DCMS Cultural Development Fund will deliver Phase 1 of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor in Kent and Essex. The bid was one of only five successful bids nationally, and the only successful bid from the South East.

The Production Corridor was highlighted in the Government's response to the Thames Estuary 2050 report and the University of the Arts London's successful Strength in Places Expression of Interest to increase productivity in the screen, stage and the performing arts in the Estuary, will lead to a full bid for £25m this September. The inclusion of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor narrative was cited as a 'significant factor' in success at EO1 stage.

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

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**1. Background**

- 1.1** The Thames Estuary Production Corridor Partnership was established by the South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN) and the Greater London Authority (GLA), supported by Kent County Council and Thurrock Council, who together in 2017 launched the Thames Estuary Production Corridor.
- 1.2** The Thames Estuary Production Corridor is a partnership that has been collaborating flexibly across the Thames Estuary geography for over three years. Its membership has

grown and, having established significant momentum, it will be formalised with a governance and management structure to bring capacity to the next stage of delivery.

- 1.3** The partnership is currently steered by a Partnership Board co-chaired by SELEP and the GLA, and its members compromise South East Creative Economy Network, Kent and Essex County Councils, local authorities represented by Thames Gateway Kent Partnership and Opportunity South Essex, the Royal Docks, Universities of Kent and Essex and the cultural organisation, Metal.
- 1.4** The Thames Estuary Production Corridor geography mirrors the Thames Estuary 2050 Commission boundary, covering an area that borders the north and south banks of the River Thames from East London to Thanet and Southend.
- 1.5** Kent County Council and Thurrock Council, with financial support from Arts Council England, appointed Emma Wilcox & Associates to identify specific Thames Estuary Production Corridor projects and enablers in the Kent and Essex Estuary areas. This included extensive consultation with local authorities and the sector and resulted in a Thames Estuary Production Corridor Framework for North Kent and South Essex. (see Appendix A).
- 1.6** To support the economic case for investment, consultants Hatch Regeneris were appointed in 2018 funded by the GLA, SELEP, three London Boroughs and the Royal Docks. The report identifies the Estuary as 'A Region of Creation, Innovation and Talent', a global super-cluster of cultural and creative production, with the potential to drive innovation, growth and the competitiveness of the UK creative economy for the next generation. These emerging findings helped convince the Secretary of State to refer to the Production Corridor when announcing the Government's support for investment in the Thames Estuary.

## **2. Progress to date**

### **2.1 The Case for Investment**

- 2.1.1** The Estuary is home to 16,300 creative and cultural production businesses which have increased in number by 37% over the last 5 years; 100,000 creative industry workers live in the Estuary; there is a dense network of education institutes, 21 with creative industries specialisms, that are already coalescing to form a powerful academic curriculum and programme for skills development and knowledge exchange. Place-based cultural clusters, Margate for example, are a critical breeding ground for new cultural production. Growth is underpinned by investment of over £200 million in the last decade in production facilities and with an additional 150+ cultural and creative projects currently in the pipeline.
- 2.1.2** The Estuary's geographic proximity to London – a global creative super power, the availability of space, the fine grain of the industrial landscape, the mobilisation of creative networks, the continued growth of its excellent cultural offer, all make the Estuary a compelling location to invest in the growth of the UK's creative industries.
- 2.1.3** To deliver on this national opportunity, the Thames Estuary Production Corridor will transform the scale and visibility of the creative infrastructure and activities across the Estuary under three enabler actions:

**Identity:** building a shared cultural identity for the Thames Estuary, developing brand and shared economic and cultural narrative to galvanise connectivity and attract inward investment.

**Space and Places:** nurturing long term investment to secure new types of sustainable work and production space; developing accessible, affordable and transformational infrastructure to support growth.

**Talent:** build on existing strengths to champion a new generation of innovators and leaders; develop and nurture talent to release the potential of the Estuary's young people, freelancers, start-ups and SMEs.

## **2.2 Thames Estuary 2050 Commission**

**2.2.1** The Thames Estuary 2050 Commission Report, chaired by Sir John Armitt, recognises the power of the creative industries to contribute to the economic revival of the Thames Estuary: it acknowledged the Production Corridor's ambition to deliver growth, playing a role in delivering new jobs, cross-sector innovation and supply chain activity that is already delivering an estimated £128 million spend per annum.

**2.2.2** In March 2019, the Government's response to the Thames Estuary 2050 Commission prioritised financial support of £350,000 for the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, positioning the Production Corridor as a clear part of the case making narrative for the Estuary. This funding secures project management resource and investment in site development, presenting a more coherent and investment-ready story to investors.

**2.2.3** Negotiations are due to take place with MHCLG on the detail of delivery. The Partnership has requested that funding secures project management capacity and investment in site development, presenting a more coherent and investment-ready story to investors.

**2.2.4** The Thames Estuary Production Corridor Partnership is due to be formally constituted. It is proposed that one partner, probably the GLA, takes on the role of accountable body, as University of Kent has for the DCMS Cultural Development Fund.

## **2.3 DCMS Cultural Development Fund**

**2.3.1** Kent and Essex partners of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor have been successful in securing a DCMS Cultural Development Fund Grant of £4.3 million: with match funding the project has a budget of £6.7m.<sup>1</sup> University of Kent is the accountable body for managing the grant; the Accountability Board is composed of University of Kent and SECEN; KCC is a member of the Project Steering Group and convenor for one of the workstreams (see 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 below). The Project Steering Group reports into the Thames Estuary Production Corridor Partnership Board. KCC was instrumental in the bid submission, working across the partnership to coordinate ideas and funding bid development. Other partners were Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, Opportunity South Essex, SECEN and Universities of Kent and Essex. The bid development presented an opportunity to test relationships, develop understanding of roles and evidenced need for investment in capacity.

**2.3.2** London is not included in the DCMS Cultural Development Fund but its participation is

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<sup>1</sup> See paragraph 4.1 below

secured through the Production Corridor Partnership. The fund enables delivery of Phase 1 of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor in North Kent and South Essex..

**2.3.3** The fund will deliver seven workstreams, badged as ‘sparks’, which directly contribute to the Thames Estuary Production Corridor narrative and delivery. Each spark is managed by a convenor who reports to the project steering group. KCC is convening Spark 5 ‘Cultural Co-Location’ in partnership with Ebbsfleet DC. The cultural co-location model is being developed by Ebbsfleet DC as part of its cultural strategy and will deliver a transferable model of national significance. It provides a sustainable model for embedding cultural activity into new residential developments to create culturally vibrant places. An open learning approach is being adopted to the R&D phase of the model, involving partners from Essex, planning authorities and critical thinking in planning and culture. A series of pilot projects will test the model and see new spaces for culture generated across the Estuary’s new places and communities.

**2.3.4**

	<b>Description</b>	<b>KCC Role</b>
<b>Spark 1</b> Estuary Festival 2020	International showcase for the Estuary’s cultural activity. Increased commissioning in North Kent, led by Whitstable Biennale. Convenor: Metal Southend.	Funder £30,000
<b>Spark 2</b> Cultural Commissioning	New cultural commissions to encourage collaboration increasing quality, diversity and visibility of production activities; support production labs and testbeds. Convenor: University of Kent.	Funder £20,000
<b>Spark 3</b> Place Promotion	Pan-estuary branding to empower places to put creative and cultural production at the heart of their external inward investment and visitor offer. Working with existing inward investment agencies and DMOs, including Locate in Kent. Convenor: Thames Gateway Kent Partnership	Partner
<b>Spark 4</b> Assets for Production	Developing a collective, strategic model to identify and pool publicly owned property assets to provide creative production space. Currently convened by Opportunity South Essex, due to be transferred to either Southend Council or Thames Gateway Kent Partnership who offering more capacity and resources.	Funder/partner £20,000
<b>Spark 5</b> Cultural Co-Location	Cultural Co-Location responds to the Estuary’s residential development and regeneration areas, embedding cultural vibrancy into the heart of new places. The focus in Kent is Ebbsfleet. Convenor: KCC	Convenor / funder £30,000
<b>Spark 6</b> Generation 2030	Remodelling creative apprenticeships to support a freelance and SME economy; upskilling local young people into the cultural and creative jobs Convenor: University of Kent	Partner
<b>Spark 7</b> Innovation labs and leaders	Bring together entrepreneurs, technologists, academics & leading professionals: each lab will focus on a specific cross-sector action research Question and prototype new solutions to contemporary Estuary issues. Showcase via a	

	series of Sector Summits. Convenor: University of Essex.	
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### **3. Next steps**

- 3.1** The Case for Investment evidence produced by Hatch Regeneris will be launched early this summer at a high-profile event, with the planned participation of Government Ministers.
- 3.2** Delivery of the DCMS Cultural Development Fund over the next three years will raise the national and international profile and momentum to the Thames Estuary Production Corridor in Kent and Essex, and provide the opportunity to showcase the area, re-align the narrative and perceptions of the Estuary, develop new production spaces and enhance the offer of the area to the sector by presenting a skilled workforce.
- 3.3** SELEP, via SECEN, and with the Greater London Authority are working to align local industrial strategies to support continued development of the creative industry sector in the Thames Estuary.
- 3.4** The Partnership is starting to review its management structure and consider the best way to bring in capacity. Work required to manage the Partnership and drive forward delivery has currently relied on a small number of people, including KCC staff, working on the project on a part-time basis. There is the opportunity to utilise the MHCLG funding for the Thames Estuary to bring leadership, project management and project momentum into the partnership.
- 3.5** Thames Estuary Production Corridor Partnership governance will be designed with the new governance for the wider Thames Estuary emerging from the Thames Estuary 2050 Commission. This will ensure the Production Corridor contributes to the wider Thames Estuary strategy and plans.

### **4. Financial implications**

- 4.1** Kent County Council's financial support for the Cultural Development Fund Phase 1 programme is match funding of £100,000 from the Culture and Creative Economy budget over three years as follows: £40,000 2019/20, £30,000 2020/21 and £30,000 2021/22.

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1** University of Kent is the accountable body for the Cultural Development Fund. Kent County Council will be issued with a Partnership Agreement which will be subject to our legal scrutiny.

### **6. Equalities implications**

- 6.1** The Thames Estuary Production Corridor Partnership is currently formulating its governance and management structures and processes which will comply with the equalities policies and standards of all partners.

**6.2** Governance of the Cultural Development Fund adopts the standards of the University of Kent which are consistent with those of the County Council.

## **7. Conclusion**

**7.1** The Thames Estuary Production Corridor has established a momentum for the Thames Estuary to become Europe's most productive creative corridor. A unique partnership with London and across the Estuary will deliver the Case for Investment which shows that the Estuary region is already home to a vibrant creative and cultural sector and presents a platform for economic growth. The Thames Estuary Production Corridor has gained significant traction and local and central government support, and as it moves into delivery stage long -term investment can deliver an estimated 50,000 jobs and in excess of £3.7bn GVA.

## **8. Recommendation:**

**8.1** The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

### **Background Documents**

Thames Estuary Production Corridor A framework for North Kent & South Essex: Emma Wilcox Associates 2019

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s90213/Thames%20Estuary%20Production%20Corridor%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>

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